

# The Nature and Quality of Employment of the Rural Migrants from Assam in the Urban Informal Sector in Guwahati

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**Abstract:** Rural- urban migration is one of the major causes of urbanization and is considered as the chief mechanism by which the world's urbanization trends have evolved. Many factors influence migration from the rural areas to the cities. Unskilled workers move in search of manual labour positions that are not available in rural areas. Similarly, educated workers may migrate because their human capital is better rewarded in cities. Inadequate investment and high population growth in rural areas can increase pressure on land and other resources, creating a labour surplus that drives migration.

The excess population migrating from rural to urban areas cannot be absorbed by the urban formal sector alone. In addition to this a large portion of rural migrants are basically unskilled and have limited education and hence they are unable to get job in the urban formal sectors. So they are compelled to absorb themselves in urban informal sectors because entry to this sector is free and easy. Assam experiences a process of rapid urbanization. Within the state, the urbanization process was the strongest in Kamrup district. The extraordinary rate of urbanization of Kamrup was fuelled by the explosive growth of its principal city, Guwahati. In this proposed study the researcher wants to study whether Guwahati generates adequate livelihood opportunities to support the multitudes of migrants that come into the city! After reviewing the available literature found so far, it is found that the study related to absorption of rural migrants in urban informal sector in Assam and their nature and quality of works are found scanty. To fill this research gap this proposed research is undertaken.

**Key words:** Rural-urban Migration, Informal Sector, Work Absorption, Nature and Quality of Work

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## I. INTRODUCTION

Economic growth and development involves a movement of population from agricultural areas to industrial areas leading to rapid urbanization. Rural- urban migration is one of the major causes of urbanization and is considered as the chief mechanism by which the world's urbanization trends have evolved.

Many factors influence migration from the rural areas to the cities such as globalization, rural poverty and unemployment or underemployment in rural areas. Unskilled workers move in search of manual labour positions that are not available in rural areas. Similarly, educated workers may migrate because their human capital is better rewarded in cities. Inadequate investment in rural areas adversely affects livelihoods and provides an impulse to outmigration from rural areas. Again, high population

growth in rural areas can increase pressure on land and other resources, creating a labour surplus that drives migration.

The excess population migrating from rural to urban areas cannot be absorbed by the urban formal sector alone. Because the organised sectors cannot alone generate employment for the all the workforce migrated from the rural areas. In addition to this a large portion of rural migrants are basically unskilled and have limited education and hence they are unable to get job in the urban formal sectors. So they are compelled to absorb themselves in urban informal sectors because entry to this sector is free and easy.

Assam experiences a process of rapid urbanization. Within the state, the urbanization process was the strongest in Kamrup district. The extraordinary rate of urbanization of Kamrup was fuelled by the explosive growth of its principal city, Guwahati, which accounted for 89.18% of the district's urban population, which indicates that the majority of the rural migrants into the district of Kamrup made for Guwahati.

## **II. LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **2.1 Definitions of Migration**

‘Migration is a form of geographical or spatial mobility between one geographical unit to another, generally involving a change of residence from a place of origin to a place of destination’ (Hassan, 2005:281). The United Nation Multi-lingual Dictionary defines migration as ‘a form of geographical mobility or spatial mobility between one geographical unit and another, generally involving a change of residence from the place of origin or place of departure to the place of destination or place of arrival’ ( Bhende and Kanitkar,2005).

Formally ‘migration means a change in, or shifts, other than casual, residence from one location or settlement to another involving movement across an administrative border such as a village, a districts, a state or a nation’ (Sinha and Zacharia,2005). According to Swan ‘migration is a form of geographical or spatial mobility and can be defined as the movement of people from one area to another during a given interval of time.’(2005). Lewis model (1954) which was later expanded by Fei and Ranis ( 1963) looks upon migration as essentially an equilibrating mechanism which shifts labour from labor- surplus rural economy to labor- deficit urban economy .

Thus migration can be said as a form of movement of people from one administrative place to another involving a permanent change of residence. A temporary movement from one place to another cannot be termed as migration.

### **2.2 Existing Definitions of Informal Sector**

Various labels have been used by scholars to refer to the ‘ Informal economy’: it has been called the irregular economy(Ferman and Ferman,1973), the subterranean economy ( Gutmann 1977) ,the underground economy ( Simon and Witte,1982; Houston,1987), informal economy( McCrohan and Smith,1986).

#### **1. International Definition**

As per System of National Account (1993), the informal sector consists of units engaged in the production of goods or services with the primary objective of generating employment and income to the persons concerned( Naik,2009).

#### **2. Definitions used in India**

The First Indian National Commission on Labour (1966-69) defined ‘unorganised sector workforce’ as –“those workers who have not been able to organize themselves in pursuit of their common interest due to certain constraints like casual nature of employment, ignorance and illiteracy, small and scattered size of establishments”.

In view of the above, the following definition of unorganized/informal sector has been recommended: “The informal sector consists of all unincorporated private enterprises owned by individuals or households engaged in the sale and production of goods and services operated on a proprietary or partnership basis and with less than ten total workers”.

### **2.3 Rural–Urban Migration**

The impact of rural- urban migration has been studied by the scholars from different disciplines from different perspectives. For the developing countries, migration has got special significance. To a large extent it influences the social and economic planning of the country concerned. Therefore, the study of migration is a part of ‘formal demography’.

Ravenstein, (1885, 1889), suggested that all migration emanates from low productivity areas and proceeds towards high productivity areas. He also observed that between the rural and urban people, the latter are less migratory than the former, and migration steps up with every development in the means of transport and communication, and possibly related to the growth of trade and industry. Lewis model (1954) which was later expanded by Fei and Ranis (1963) looks upon migration as essentially an equilibrating mechanism which shifts labour from labor- surplus rural economy to labor- deficit urban economy . The model makes use of the concept of dual economy comprising a subsistence agricultural sector characterized by disguised unemployment and a capitalist sector characterized by full employment .Despite the elegance and attractiveness of this model, scholars find it unsatisfactory for analyzing the causes and consequences of migration in the Third World Countries.

Urbanization at a fast pace is today less correlated with the progress of the industrialized sector than with what has come to be described as the ‘informal sector’ or the ‘unorganized sector ’. In the informal sector entry is easy but the remuneration is low and unstable and the underemployment of labour is widespread. ILO (1972) stated that the size of the informal sector in the urban areas of the Third World countries, particularly in large cities, is so large that the need of labour supply for future industrial development can be met from within urban areas without fresh migration from the rural areas.

Different scholars have studied the impact of urbanization on such out migrants. In one such study Majumdar and Majumdar (1978) tried to show the patterns of migration, causes and motivations of rural migrants to the urban areas. In another study Khan (1986) analysed the patterns of rural migration, quantum of out-migration and the characteristics of migrants in the six districts of Eastern Uttar Pradesh. Much of the literature on rural-urban migration appears to suggest that reasons for rural out migration are basically rural poverty and unemployment.

According to Todaro (1969), migration is a direct function of the rural- urban income differential and an indirect function of the difficulty of getting modern sector jobs. A number of empirical studies have attempted to verify the main hypothesis of Todaro model. Much of the literature on rural out migration appears to suggest that the reasons for rural-urban migration are basically rural poverty, lack of land or rural unemployment. In India several scholars have undertaken studies to analyze the causes and motivations of out-migration. In one such study Devis (1951) observed that there are certain pockets and region in India which are historically known for attracting the migrants from various parts of the country. Prior to partition was Calcutta’s Industrial region, and Plantation region of Assam which were major attraction for the migrants. As pointed out by Mitra (1967) that though East and Calcutta , and Assam still remained the major attraction for the migrants ,the streams of movement were directed towards west, i.e., Maharashtra, Delhi, South Madhya Pradesh, and Mysore. Saxena (1971) in his book Indian Population in Transition remarked that for out-migrants from Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Punjab, and areas of Rajasthan were attractive.

According to 2001 Census of India out of total urban population 7.12% of population is the gross decadal inflow of rural to urban migrants in Assam which is less than all India level of 7.32%. In Assam, the studies relating to rural-urban migration are very scanty.

Assam experiences a process of rapid urbanization. This was evident in the 2011 census figures, where the urban population went up from 3, 44,831 in 1951 to 34, 39,240 in 2001 and to 43,98,542 thereby increasing the percentage of urban population to the total population from 4.29% in 1951 to 12.90% in 2001 and to 14.08 percent in 2011. Within the state, the urbanization process was the strongest in Kamrup district, where the percentage of urban population to the total population went up from 7.65% in 1951 to 36% in 2001 and to 82.7% in 2011. The extraordinary rate of urbanization of Kamrup was fuelled by the explosive growth of its principal city, Guwahati, which accounted for 93.38% of the district's urban population, which indicates that the majority of the rural migrants into the district of Kamrup made for Guwahati.

### **III. OBJECTIVES**

At this point the question of prime interest is does Guwahati generate adequate livelihood opportunities to support the multitudes of migrants that come into the city? Guwahati has dualistic economy with the organized formal sector coexisting with the unorganized informal sector. With the formal sector unable to absorb this excess labour in the city, it is the informal sector that generates the maximum opportunities for sustainable work. For these people, the informal sector provides the only avenue for survival, considering the fact that the urban formal sector has limited capacity to generate employment.

Thus, the main objectives of this study are

1. To study and estimate the magnitude of migration from rural Assam to Guwahati.
2. To discuss the absorption pattern of the rural migrants in various informal sectors in Guwahati.
3. To assess their quality of employment in the informal sectors.

### **IV. DATA SOURCE AND RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

#### **a) Coverage**

The population in the study discusses about the out-migrants from different parts of rural Assam over last two decades and their absorption in various informal sectors in Guwahati.

#### **b) Data Collection**

The secondary data are collected from the published Govt. reports, Govt. Departments, journals and any other relevant source. To substantiate and complement secondary data, the primary data have been collected. The universe of the study area comprises of 31 wards of Guwahati and these 31 wards are classified in 6 zones as per the guideline of GMC.

#### **c) Sampling Design**

Out of each zone one to two wards are conveniently selected. Thus from the Central Zone Machkhowa area of ward 9, from the Dispur zone Hatigaon and Kahilipara area of ward 26 and Beltola area of ward 28, from East zone ABC, Christian Basti and Ganesh guri area of ward 19 and Narengi area of ward 24, from Lokra zone Lalganesh area of ward 16, from south zone uzan bazaar area of ward 11 and shilpukhuri area of ward 13, and from West zone Lankeswar area of ward 1 and Maligaon area of ward 4 have been selected. Here accidental sampling technique has been appropriated.

Total number of sample is 373 which have been selected using Krejcie and Morgan formula.

A structured schedule has been used to collect the data.

For this study the informal sector will consist of broadly construction, Trade, transport, personal services, waste collection and hotel and restaurant.

#### **d) Data Analysis**

The research methodology consists of quantitative as well as qualitative approaches. For the analysis of data standard statistical and econometric tools have been used.

### **V. FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS**

#### **5.1 Magnitudes of Migrations in Guwahati:**

In Guwahati, the number of migrants has significantly gone up by 36.78 % from 1991 to 2001 i.e. from 276,835 in 1991 to 378,657 in 2001. It should be mentioned that the migration data of 2011 census for Guwahati has not been released till date and so the researcher has to rely on 2001 census in order to find out the magnitude of migration in Guwahati.

In 1991, among the three types of internal migration, inter district migration dominates with a 51.7% of the total migration flows. Guwahati witnessed a very high rate of growth in the period from 1971 to 1991; 8.1 per cent p.a., which is likely on account of the city becoming Assam's capital in 1972, migration from rural Assam and other states of the North-East region of India, and also the cross-border migration from Bangladesh after the latter's formation in 1972. Since then, GMC area has registered slowing down of population growth rate, from 3.3 per cent p.a. in 1991-2001 periods and 1.8 per cent p.a. in 2001-11 periods. This means that the migration rate to the city has slowed down in the decade of 2001-11 due to either decline in migrants from other North-East states and rural Assam or decline from cross-border migration or both. Thus, contrary to the expectation, the population of Guwahati city and its metropolitan region has stabilised since 2001 due to economic and geo-political reasons. The reason could be this is a conjecture that the population from other NE states, who were earlier migrating to Guwahati alone, have begun to migrate to other parts of India, resulting decline in in-migration to Guwahati city.

#### **5.2 Causes of Migration**

There are various push and pull factors associated with the process of migration. The push factors are associated with the area of origin while the pull factors are associated with the area of destination. As per the provisional census report 2011, out of total migrants of 1,01,55,052 in Assam, 51,64,592 persons (51 percent) migrants are due to marriage. Thus out of total population of 31,20,55,76 (as per 2011 census) 32.54 percent population are migratory population in Assam.

However in case of Kamrup Metro district it is seen observed in 2011 census that 39.6 percent of total migrants is due to marriage and all together 21.6 percent i.e. 65,657 is due to in search of employment/work. Kamrup metro in general and Guwahati in particular is the source of earning livelihood for more than 1/5<sup>th</sup> of migrants.

As compared to other towns and cities of the state, Guwahati attracts the maximum number of migrants, both from the country and within the state which is reflected in Table- 1. It is evident from the table that a majority of migrants move to urban centres in search of better livelihood.

**Table-1** Distribution of Migrants in search of Livelihood

City	Total Migrants	Migrants for livelihood
Nagaon	29,246	6,106
Jorhat	50,889	9,905
Tinisukia	40,066	11,762
Silchar	58,567	8,730

Tezpur	32,754	5,351
Dibrugarh	39,305	8,816
Guwahati	3,78,657	1,14,681

Source: Computed from Migration Table (2001), D-Series, (Table D-03, U-A City), Census of India, Assam.

### 5.3 Absorption Pattern of Migrants in Informal Sector:

The urban informal sector readily provides sustenance to the rural migrants equipped with low education and skills. Thus, for these people, the informal sector provides the only avenue for survival, considering the fact that the urban formal sector has limited capacity to generate employment. This is clear by a recent study which indicates that the informal sector of this city has absorbed about 90 percent of its total workforce (Chakravarty & Barua, 2000).

The workforce in the informal service sector in Guwahati, comprising of the urban poor and lower-income groups, are likely to be petty shopkeepers and vegetable sellers, small shop assistants, mechanics, cleaners, domestic help, cooks and waiters in food joints, construction workers, cycle rickshaw drivers, and manual labourers working in the wholesale and retail markets. In a study conducted by Centre for Urban Equity in eight informal settlements in Guwahati in the year 2012 it was found that predominant employment among the female workers was personnel services (as domestic workers) (25 per cent), followed by construction (15 per cent), waste collection (14 per cent) and public services and administration (12 per cent). For working males, the predominant employment was petty trade (24 per cent), followed by construction (21 per cent), then transport (18 per cent) and waste collection (11.2 per cent).

**Table 2:** Employment Indicators by Gender

Employment sector (%)	Male	Female	Total
<b>Manufacturing</b>	2.8	4.2	3.1
<b>Construction</b>	20.5	14.6	19.5
<b>Wholesale trade</b>	1.4	0.0	1.2
<b>Petty trade</b>	23.9	10.4	21.7
<b>Waste collection</b>	11.2	13.5	11.5
<b>Transport</b>	18.3	3.1	15.8
<b>Hotel &amp; restaurant</b>	1.4	7.3	2.4
<b>ICT + Finance + Real estate</b>	2.6	5.2	3.1
<b>Public admin + social service</b>	5.7	11.5	6.6
<b>Personnel services</b>	6.3	25.0	9.3
<b>Others (unspecified)</b>	5.7	5.2	5.6
<b>Total</b>	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: Desai et al (2012)

Given the fact that livelihood constitutes a major inducement for migration and the informal sector (which is dominated by migrant labour) generates most of the employment opportunities in Guwahati's economy, it is deduced that there is an intimate relationship between migration into Guwahati and the employment opportunities generated in its informal sector. Hence as migrants stream into the city, most of them (especially the illiterate and unskilled) are initially absorbed into the informal sector. There they eke out a living working as street vendor, hawker, shoe-shine, domestic help, daily wage labourer in construction sites, public works, small garage, tea shops etc. Over a

period of time they acquire skill by *learning by doing* and consolidate themselves. Once they establish themselves they induce their families and friends to migrate as well and the cycle continues.

#### 5.4 Nature and Quality of Informal Workers

Here the researcher tries to portray a socio economic profile of the rural migrants in respect of their nature and quality of works in the city Guwahati on the basis of his field survey conducted during the course of his study.

##### a) Religion

From the survey it was observed that out of the total sample of 273 of informal rural migrants workers 190 workers belong to the Muslim community followed by Hindu (160) and Others (23). Thus out of total sample workers 51 percent are from Muslim community, 43 percent from Hindu and only 6 percent are from other community (Christian, Buddhist etc.).

**Table 3: Religion**

Religion	Nos. Of Informal Workers	Percentage
Hindu	160	43
+Muslim	190	51
Others	23	6
Total	273	100

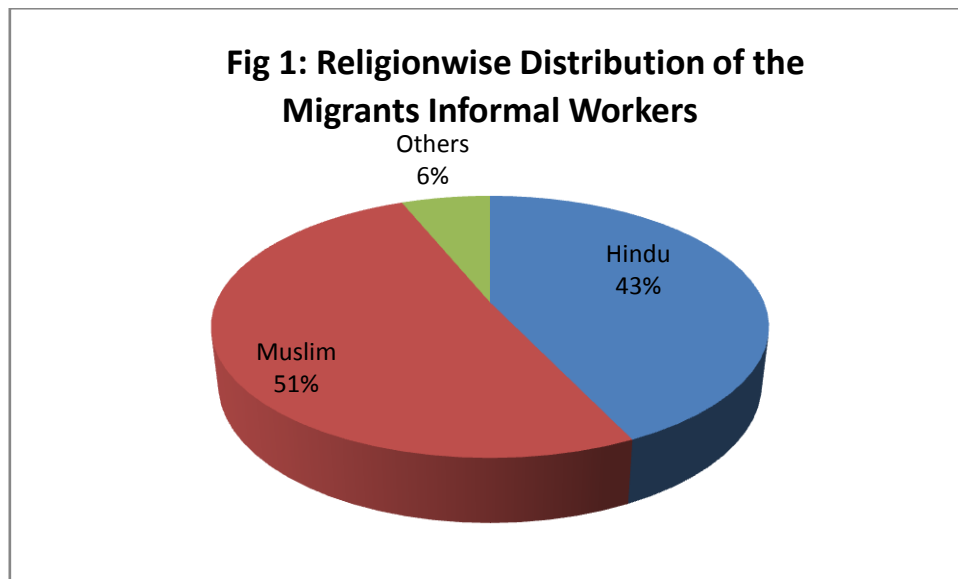
Source: Field Study

These percentages of workers are shown in the following figure 1 with the help of a pie diagram. The figure clearly shows the majority of Muslim workers dominate the informal sector. However, if you look into the subsector wise distribution of workers it is observed that while Muslim community dominates the Construction, Petty Trade, Transport and Waste Collection sector, the Hindu community workers dominate the Personal and Hotel and Restaurant sector in Guwahati. This can be observed from the table 5 in the following.

**Table 4: Religion wise distribution of Workers in different informal sub-sectors**

Religion	Construction	Petty Traders	Transport	Personal Services	Waste Collection	Hotel & Restaurant	Total
Hindu	35	43	35	25	16	6	160
Muslim	53	48	39	15	33	2	190
Others	4	10	1	1	6	1	23
Total	92	101	75	41	55	9	373

Source: Field Study



**b) Education**

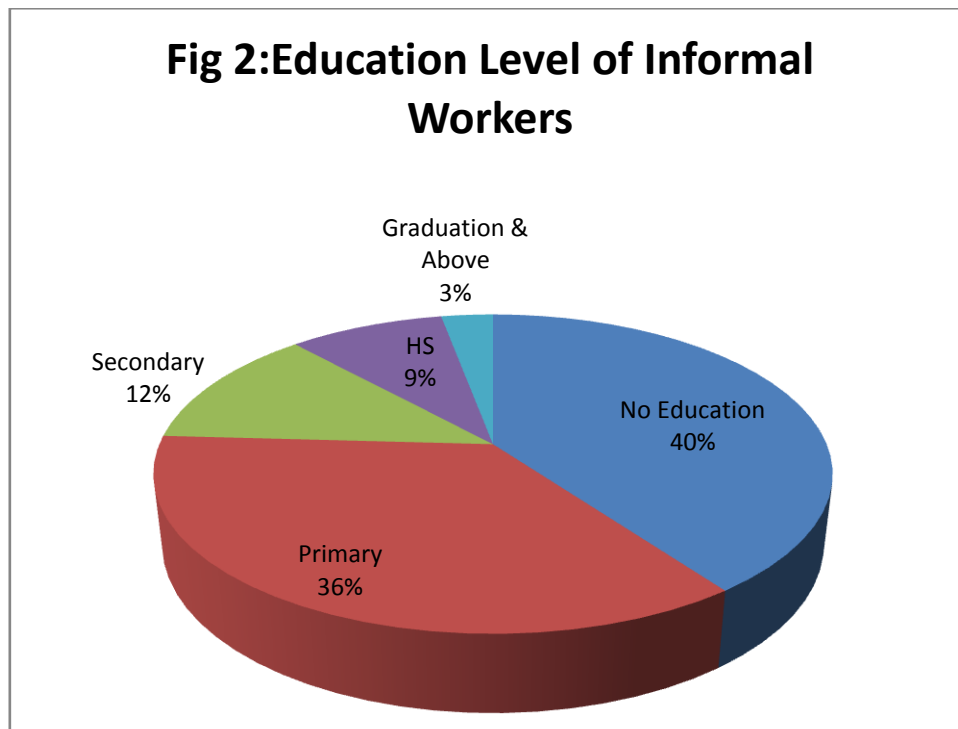
From the various study it was found that the most of the rural migrants are of having low skill and lower education and so they are compelled to absorb themselves in the informal sectors. This is because the entry into the informal sectors is easy. From the field study it is found that 40 percent of the informal workers have no education and 36 percent of the informal workers are having education only to primary level. Thus about 76 percent of the informal workers are of low skill category .Whatever skilled they have gathered are through their self learning in the various activities they have engaged themselves in.

**Table 5:** Educational Level of the Workers, 2017-2018

Education Level	Nos. Of Workers
No Education	149
Primary	134
Secondary	46
Higher Secondary	33
Graduation & Above	11
<b>Total</b>	<b>373</b>

Source: Field Study





**c) Income**

The average income level of the rural informal workers is Rs 4714 per month which is higher than the State Monthly per capita income of Rs 2055 but lower than the Monthly per capita income of the district Kamrup Metro which is Rs 5287 as per the report of Human Development of Assam, 2014. Thus the average income earned by the rural informal workers is not at all sufficient to prosecute their day to day minimum expenditures in a city like Guwahati. Besides, most of the works in the informal sectors are of seasonal and temporary nature and as such the actual monthly per capita income of the informal workers may be lower than the estimated amount of Rs 4714. The cost of living in Guwahati has been increasing at a rapid rate for last two to three decades, so the informal workers in Guwahati have been facing difficulties in prosecuting their day to day expenditures.

From the field study it is observed that income level of the workers in the informal sector has high positive correlation with the level of education. For this a simple linear regression model has been formulated-

Model:  $Y = \alpha + \beta X + U$

Where  $Y = \text{Income}$ ,  $X = \text{Level of Education}$ ,  $U = \text{Random term}$  and  $\alpha, \beta$  are parameters.

**Table 6: Education Level and Income**

Education Level	Income(Rs)	R	R <sup>2</sup>	Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	F	t	$\beta$
Illiterate	4000						
Primary	4200						
Secondary	5500				50.879	7.133	1
Higher Secondary	7500	0.972	0.944	0.926	sig	Sig	3
Graduation & Above	9000				0.006	0.006	3
							0

From the table it is seen that the  $R^2$  is 0.944 which means that 94.4 percent changes in income of the informal workers are due to the increase in the level of education. Both the 't' and 'F' values are also found significant. Since  $\beta=1330$ , it means every increase in the level of education will lead to an increase of income of Rs 1330.

**d) Gender-Income Gap**

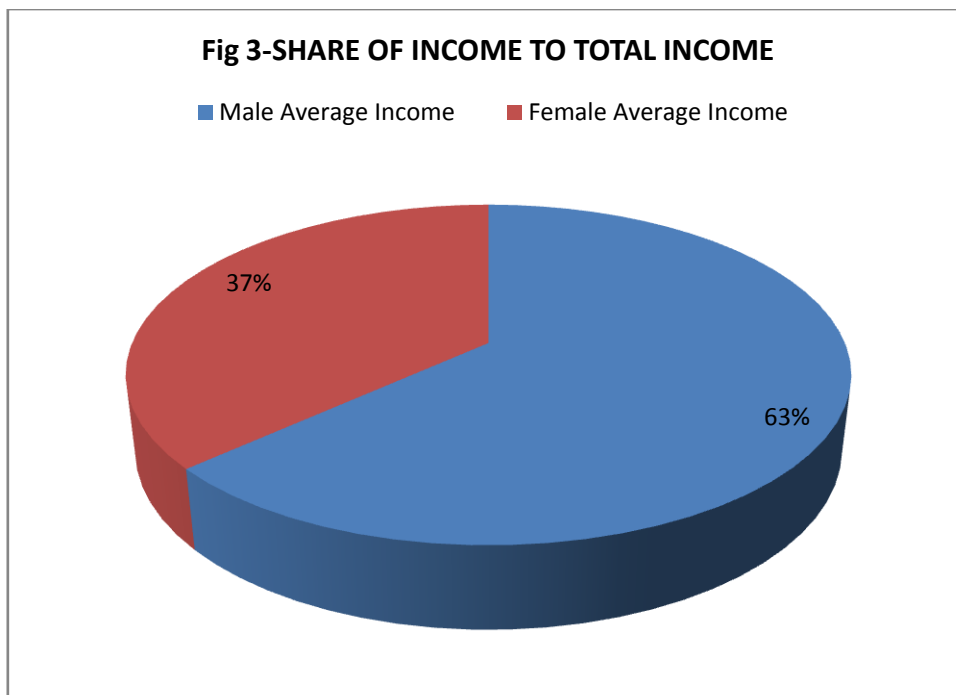
In the study discrimination of income distribution is observed in respect of Gender. It is seen that the mean income of the male workers is more than their female counterpart.

In the following figure 6.4 it is seen that 63 percent of the total income is concentrated in the hands of the male informal workers which clearly depicts that female workers are paid less than the male workers for the same work.

**Table 7: Gender- Income Gap**

Gender	Numbers	Mean Income
Male	290	5200
Female	83	3015

Source- Field Study



**e) Age Composition of the Informal Workers**

The age composition of the migrant informal workers is shown in the following table 9. In the table it is observed that the maximum informal workers' age group is 30-45 (30.8%) followed by the age group of 15-30 with an employment percentage of 25.2 %. It should be mentioned that 6.7 percentages of informal workers are in the age group below 15 years which violates the basic clause of the Child Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Amendment Act, 2016.

**f) Origin of the Workers**

From the field study it is revealed that the informal sectors in Guwahati absorb workers from all most all the sub-divisions of Assam. However, 68.9 percent informal workers engaged in various

sub-sectors in Guwahati is from the lower Assam sub-division followed by upper Assam with a percentage of 13.67. Districts wise the highest migrants absorbed in the informal sectors come from Kamrup Rural followed by Barpeta, Dhubri and Nalbari district respectively. However, the highest percentage of workers engaged in the construction sector are from Dhubri District (28.2%) while in case of petty traders the workers are from Kamrup Rural (31.68%) followed by Barpeta District (21.78%).

**Table 8-** Sub-division wise Informal Workers

Divisions	Districts↓	Total
Hills and Barak Valley	Cachar, Karimganj	20 (5.36%)
Central Assam	Dima Hasao, Morigaon, Nagaon	24 (6.43%)
Lower Assam	Baska, Baepeta, Bongaigaon, Dhubri, Goalpara, Nalbari, Kamrup(R), Kokrajhar, South Salmara-Manchar	257 (68.90%)
North Assam	Biswanath, Darang, Udalguri	21 (5.63%)
Upper Assam	Dhemaji, Dibrugarh, Golaghat, Jorhat, Lakhimpur, Sivasagar, Tinisukia	51 (13.67%)
Total		373(100)

#### 5.4.1 Employment Quality in the informal Sector

The quality of employment is a very important point to be addressed in case of the informal workers in a city. The quality of employment is a multidimensional concept. Many international organizations emphasise the importance of quality of employment in their work. It contributes to material and psychological well being of its members.

In this study the quality of employment of the rural migrants workers in the aforesaid six sub-sectors of urban informal sector are trying to be analysed. In doing following indicators have been used to assess the quality of their works-

- Working hour -whether working hour is less than 8 hours or more per day!
- Whether safety measures are used in the work place?
- Sanitation and safe drinking water in the work place.
- Any kind of harassment from the employer as well as from the authority in the work place.
- Any kind of medical facility like free health checkup ,doctors on call, free medicine and so on
- Provident account facility.
- Income per month

After analysing the data obtained from the field study it is found that quality of employment is very meagre in case of most of the informal workers in Guwahati. It has already be mentioned that the average income of the informal workers in Guwahati is lower than Kamrup Metro. The conditions are more pathetic in case of the female informal workers because it was found that the mean wage of female informal workers is 3500 per month which is quite less than their male counterpart (male mean wage is 5200 per month). Again female informal workers are more prone to be abused by the authority compare to the male workers. It was also observed from the study that out of total surveyed informal workers only 10 percent are working less than 8 hours per day, 20 percent have free medical facility and only 7 percent of the workers are having sanitation and filtered drinking water facility in

Guwahati. Though in order to provide social security to the workers in the unorganised sector, the Government has enacted the Unorganised Workers' Social Security Act, 2008 yet the social and economic security of the informal workers are not at all satisfactory in the city Guwahati. The benefits of various social security programs are not being percolated to the informal workers in Guwahati. This is clear from the survey conducted during the course of this research. It was found that only 22 percent of the informal workers are aware of the Programs like APY, PMJBY, PMSBY and only 17 percent of the respondents are enrolled themselves to such Programs only.

## VI. CONCLUSION

Thus it is observed from our study that the informal sector is a pivotal sector in providing employment avenues to the people who have migrated to Guwahati in search of better work from the different parts of the Assam. However, conditions of the workers are very insubstantial in respect of the qualities as discussed above. The informal workers are also not able to reap the benefits of the various government schemes due to the lack of awareness among them. So the government as well as the various social organisations should take the initiative to make the informal workers aware about those schemes which are meant for them. Since Guwahati becomes the hub for all the migrants from every respect and as such to reduce the force of migrants workers in the city the social, educational and economic infrastructures of the other sub divisions like Central, Upper, North and Hills and Barak Valley should also be developed.

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